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Last of the Salem witches exonerated

November 2, 2001

FREE PRESS NEWS SERVICES

BOSTON -- Descendants of those executed during the infamous 17th-Century witch hunts in Salem were cheering Thursday after the last of their wrongly accused ancestors were exonerated.

In a move that brings an end to a 300-year controversy haunting the state of Massachusetts, acting Gov. Jane Swift approved a bill that clears the accused witches hanged in 1692 and 1693.

"It's a great thing. They should have been exonerated a long time ago," said Sharon Tirone, whose ancestor Sarah Wildes was hanged on Gallows Hill near Salem and then exonerated in 1711.

"These relatives were very distraught about this; they really took it to heart and they fought very hard for this," she said.

Swift signed the bill Wednesday as the town of Salem, which was rocked by the colonial-era hysteria, was in the midst of its annual Halloween celebration.

The bill exonerates Susannah Martin, Bridget Bishop, Alice Parker, Margaret Scott and Wilmot Redd and was brought to the state legislature by descendants of some of the women accused and executed.

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